

К 150-ЛЕТНЕМУ ЮБИЛЕЮ А. М. ГОРЬКОГО

УДК 821.161.1(Горький М.)
ББК Ш33(2Рос=Рус)6-8,4

ГСНТИ 17.09.91

Код ВАК 10.01.01

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ГОРЬКИЙ И «ЕВАНГЕЛИЕ НОВОЙ ВЕРЫ»

Аннотация. Отношение М. Горького к проблеме социалистического реализма значительно сложнее, чем принято считать. Для его понимания необходимо комплексно рассматривать эволюцию Горького как интеллектуала, политика и писателя. Горький чувствовал «необходимость обогащения марксизма как экономического и социально-политического учения морально-этическим и философско-религиозным смыслом» и был воодушевлен глубокой верой в человека. Его понимание марксизма осложнялось романтическим и ницшеанским видением жизни, усвоенным из философии Ницше. Во время своего путешествия в Соединенные Штаты Горький впервые определил социализм как будущую религию Человечества, которая освободит весь мир от нищеты и власти богатства. Этим идеям Горький останется верен всю жизнь. Неслучайно, писатель использовал для своего доклада на I Съезде советских писателей текст статьи, опубликованной в 1909 году под заголовком «Разрушение личности» в сборнике «Очерки философии коллективизма», отвергнутой Лениным, усмотревшим в ней присутствие богдановских идей, а в 1934 году без оговорок принятой Сталиным. В докладе звучала проповедь религии человечества, искупленной мистикой труда — идеи, которая захватила его во времена дружбы с Луначарским. Чтобы вписаться в новую партийную идеологию, Горькому не пришлось внутренне перестраиваться. В крестьянстве, поставленном под контроль сталинской политикой, видится ему уже не анархическая угроза, как в 1917 году, а возможность трудного и долгожданного культурного искупления. Идея социалистической индустриализации России была ближе Горькому, чем ленинская идея революции. Горьковское понимание социалистического реализма соотносится с религиозным пониманием правды и вымысла: писатели могли не выдумывать, а писать по вдохновению, исходящему свыше. В этом контексте выясняется, что горьковское определение социалистического реализма не укладывалось в русло ленинской мысли, а опиралось на «ересь», резко раскритикованную Лениным. Оно было отражением традиционной русской религиозности, настрой которой прекрасно чувствовал бывший семинарист Иосиф Виссарионович. На Первом съезде советских писателей стало очевидно, что идея «богостроительства», развитая в повести «Исповедь», вновь возродилась в речи Горького в несколько завуалированном, но узнаваемом виде. Публицистический успех, который имела его речь, помешал ее правильному истолкованию. Очевидно, нельзя называть Горького «основоположником социалистического реализма», не учитывая эволюции его литературно-художественной позиции, поскольку это приведет к упрощению и искажению реальной картины.

Ключевые слова: социалистический реализм; литературные течения; марксизм; русские писатели; русская литература; литературное творчество.

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GORKY AND “THE GOSPEL OF THE NEW FAITH”

Abstract. M. Gorky's position towards defining the socialist realism is complex and in order to understand it correctly one must analyse his intellectual, political and literary evolution as a whole. Gorky felt “the need to enrich both the economical and socio-political aspects of Marxism with morally-ethical and philosophically-religious meaning” and was exhilarated by his deep belief in man. His understanding of Marxism happened via his perception of Nietzsche and therefore his views were based on romantic, Nietzschean worldview. During his visit to the United States Gorky for the first time defined socialism as the future religion of humanity that will free the world of poverty and the reign of wealth. Gorky would remain faithful to these ideas his whole life. It was no accident that Gorky chose his article “The disintegration of Personality” printed in 1909 in the “Essays on the Philosophy of Collectivism” collection, which was refused by Lenin for including the dangerous ideas of Bogdanov and later in 1934 fully accepted by Stalin, for his speech at the First Soviet Writers' Congress. Here the religion of humanity, redeemed by the mysticism of labor, emerges again. This idea captivated him during his friendship with Lunacharsky. In order to fit in the new Party ideology Gorky didn't have to reorganize himself. He sees no anarchistic threat in the peasantry controlled by Stalin's policy, like in 1917, but rather a possibility of long-awaited difficult cultural redemption. The idea of socialist industrialization of Russia was more appealing to Gorky than Lenin's idea of the revolution. Socialist realism, as writes Cesare De Michelis has many points in common with the Russian religious tradition. In this context, the Gorky's speech on the first Soviet Writers' Congress, which «instead of complying with Lenin's ideology was based on “heresy”, heavily criticized by Lenin before, “the God Building”, was a reflection of traditional Russian religiousness that Joseph Vissarionovich (Stalin), former trainee priest, understood perfectly. During the First Soviet Writers' Congress it became obvious that the idea of “God-building”, developed in the novel “Confession”, was reborn in Gorky's speech, although in a clouded but still recognizable way. The publicist success of the speech led to its incorrect understanding. Speaking about Gorky as “the founder of socialist realism” without referencing to the evolution of his literary and artistic position would be an unforgivable simplification that can distort the real picture.

Keywords: socialistic realism; literary trends; Marxism; Russian writers; Russian literature; writing.

M. Gorky was called «the founder of the socialist realism» after the first Soviet Writers' Congress and his novel «Mother» became a characteristic example of this literary current. Alexander Flaker, in the article on Socialist Realism, wrote for the most important History of

Russian literature published in Italy, affirms: «thanks to this novel Gorky was able to take the role of the leading writer, even after all the criticism he withstood in the 1920-s» [Flaker 1997: 396]. In reality M. Gorky's position towards the definition of socialist realism is much

more complex, and his intellectual, political and literary evolution must be taken into consideration for understanding it. There were the years that directly precede the writing of «Mother» when he approached the Bolshevik Party and formed mature literary and political convictions. It is worth noting that his approach to Marxism differed greatly from Lenin's one. Gorky felt «the need to enrich both the economical and socio-political aspects of Marxism with morally-ethical and philosophically-religious meaning» and was animated by deep belief in man.

Gorky's cult of person developed long before his acquaintance with Marxism. He wrote this in 1897: «I don't know anything better, more complex and interesting than a man. He is everything [...] I'm certain that century after century a person is capable of developing himself as well as all his activities» [Gorky 1997: 377]. With time, however, his worldview changed and became richer; he tried to mirror his contemporary world in his works as all the other writers do. Using his correspondence from the start of the 20th century as a basis we can examine how his individual rebellion slowly transformed into an intellectual attempt to impart meaning to everyday life by bringing together the divine and the earthly. This is how Gorky created the prototype of a communist hero in his novel «Mother», a kind of a secular hagiography, quite distant from a poor man's biography of his first short stories.

On the theoretical level this transformation happened during Gorky's Capri years (1909) when he chose preference to A. Bogdanov's Marxism, but he had pondered the true essence of the revolution in 1906, when he was in New-York, independently of his later contacts with A. Bogdanov and A. Lunacharsky: «The concept of the revolution should be developed further. It is possible!» [Gorky 1997: 210]. This ambition drove him to search for an ethical and religious meaning of the revolution aside from the political significance, a moral alternative that, according to Gorky, should inspire everyone to fight for a new life and to build a renewed humanity [Spiridonova 2004: 65]. This transition from one phase to another took its final form between 1902 and 1909. In 1902 Gorky was present at the Sormovo demonstration, which later became one of the central scenes of «Mother», and he started showing interest in the ideas of the author of «The Capital». He understood Marxism via his perception of Nietzsche and therefore his views were based on romantic, Nietzschean worldview. Romanticism, according to him, means «waiting for something new» [Gorky 1939: 42], and in this regard the only interpretation of Marxism he could have chosen was the one given by A. Bogdanov with his project of building «a new man», as pointed out by E. N. Nikitin [Nikitin 2000]. Paradoxically, for Gorky it was the only way to combine Nietzsche's philosophy with that of Marx [Semenova: 72–78]. The new era would be «dominated» by the anonymous masses that have no control over their lives, and not by Nietzschean «superhuman», who is free to choose its own fate.

It was during his trip to the United States that A. M. Gorky defined socialism as the future religion of humanity for the first time. «Socialism is a phase in the development of culture, a civilized movement. It is the

religion of the future that will free the world from poverty and the rough reign of wealth. In order to be understood correctly I will say that socialism demands straining the mind and harmoniously developing all the emotional strength of a man» [Gorky 2001: 441]. Gorky will remain faithful to these ideas, which he presented in the articles of those years as well as in his novels «Mother» and «Confession», for the rest of his life. It was no accident that Gorky chose his article «The Collapse of the Person» printed in 1909 in the «Essays on the Philosophy of Collectivism» collection, which was denounced by Lenin for including the dangerous ideas of Bogdanov and later in 1934 fully accepted by Stalin, for his speech at the First Soviet Writers' Congress. It is worth noting that Gorky had sent the text of his speech to the leader of the Bolshevik Party a few days before the start of the Congress so that he would approve it: «I'm sending you the text of my speech and I ask you to let me know as soon as possible if I need to introduce changes to it» [Gorky 1998: 296]. Ironically Stalin found nothing wrongful in it, at least formally, even though he wasn't completely satisfied with it. He writes this in his letter to Kaganovich from 18 August 1934: «The Writers' Congress opened yesterday. Gorky made a good opening statement, as you have already learned from the newspapers» [Stalin and Kaganovich: 441].

Gorky remained faithful to the ideas of his Capri years and underlined the importance of cultural enlightenment of the masses in order to help the proletariat fully comprehend the great moving towards deeds. He insisted that this comprehension required pathos and human religion rather than criticism, and especially Marxist criticism, to reach its full potential. Here the religion of humanity, redeemed by the mysticism of labor, emerges again. This idea captivated him during his friendship with Lunacharsky. The union of religion and socialism, which had caused Lenin's indignation, was again becoming possible, and even more so — necessary, in the light of Stalin's restoration. Both in the first and the second cases he was guided by the same impetus — a pseudo-religious collectivism manifested in the idea of «God-building» that received its literary development in the novel «Confession» in 1909 and put into practice in Soviet Russia in the end of the 1920s and the beginning of 1930s [Strada 1994: 22–23].

Everything that the revolution had lost in the aspect of freedom was compensated in industrialization. In order to fit in the new Party ideology Gorky didn't have to reorganize himself. He sees no anarchistic threat in the peasantry controlled by Stalin's policy, but rather a possibility of long-awaited difficult cultural redemption. Villages, transformed by the cultural revolution, will produce workers, technicians, engineers and scientists. In 1924 he hoped that the rural areas «will soon learn the importance of electrification, the value of an educated agronomist, the usefulness of a tractor and the necessity to keep a good doctor in every village» [Gorky 2003: 248]. What had been only a hope after V. I. Lenin's death was now being put into practice. Now it seems possible for the peasantry to «understand the importance of Shakespeare or Leonardo da Vinci» [Gorky 2003: 248]. To bring culture closer to the people, to teach the peasants to read and to write, to print

books in million strong circulations — it was his life-long dream and it was now being fulfilled. We see the view that Gorky had to praise Stalin against his will as unfounded. According to Vittorio Strada: «When Gorky accepted Stalin's revolution he was convinced that it would lay the groundwork to the great cause of collective construction by subduing the destructive anarchistic powers and he justified its repressive measures with the lofty goals it was achieving» [Strada 1994: 22–23].

Upon a closer inspection the idea of socialist industrialization was more appealing to Gorky than Lenin's idea of the revolution. The reorganization of a writer's work seemed equally natural to him. However it doesn't mean that all of Gorky's personal and political biography formed a perfect line that inevitably led him to become the chairman of the First Soviet Writers' Congress. The «new man» that he dreamed about in his youth certainly didn't present itself to him as a Hero of Labour nor as a prisoner, corrected by the Gulag's pedagogy. He must have felt robbed when Zhdanov proclaimed in his speech at the Writers' Congress that the utopian kingdom was from then on crossed out of the history of literature, he felt that he was robbed of his right to dream about anything, no matter what, but different from the everyday life.

All things considered, the image of Gorky both as a victim of Stalin and his pawn does not add up. We find the thoughts of Vittorio Strada and Cesare G. De Michelis on this subject quite illuminating [De Michelis 1988: 185–196; De Michelis 1987: 31–40]: the former sees a message in Gorky's speech at the Congress of 1934 that secretly follows from his old «God-building» teachings [Strada 1986], and he sees the source of this speech in Gorky's lectures on Russian literature that he had given to workers at the Capri school [Strada 2013: 321–331]; the latter highlights the religious nature of «God-building» by tracing the cultural references of Gorky's views back to Slavic orthodox writings. However, when Gorky was putting forth the idea that «God was an artistic generalization of the successes of labour, and the «religious» thinking of the working masses [...] was purely artistic creativity» [Gorky 1934: 6], he himself promoted a model of literature «embedded in a totalizing ideological system of a religious type» [De Michelis 1988: 38]. In the writing tradition of Slavic orthodox Christianity, which was «voluntarily collective and potentially anonymous, essentially focused on fighting for the hegemony of some value system (those of ideological and theological nature), characteristic of the Russian version of the Christian church» [De Michelis 1988: 190], literary fiction was seen as something alien to the true teaching and, therefore, against the rules. Thus, writers didn't need to imagine, to think up anything, but rather to write with the divine inspiration, i. e. to depict the truth «as lawful and direct correspondence between wording (of an idea or a fact) and the whole complex (of dogmas, commandments and values) of the given system» [De Michelis 1988: 190]. Here it needs to be pointed out that there are two terms that mean «truth» in Russian language: «правда» (pravda) and «истина» (istina). The latter, «истина», refers to a correct image of the objective reality in the human conscience, while the former, «правда», is used to express the congruence between a statement and reality [Kharina 2007]. However, according to Uspensky it is

natural (for the Russian tradition) to interpret «правда» as a divine principle and «истина» as an earthly one [Uspensky 1994: 190]. The conclusive report of the Congress references «правда» or, to be more precise, «правдивость» (pravdivost', which means «truthfulness») in a definitive way:

«Socialist realism is a primary method of Soviet literary fiction and literary criticism and therefore it demands truthful and historically correct depiction of reality in its revolutionary development. Besides, the truthfulness and historical correctness of this artistic depiction of reality must be incorporated in the task of ideological rebuilding and socialist upbringing» [Statute of the Union of Soviet Writers 1934: 712].

According to De Michelis, the reference to «правдивость» and therefore «правда» as the guiding category of socialist realism, as opposed to «истина», highlights «a deep connection with religious foundations [...] or, at the very least, literary standards of ancient Rus' (that were primarily religion-oriented)» [De Michelis 1988: 193]. Such connection as we see it complies fully with Gorky's Weltanschauung and his concept of socialism as humanity's new, secular religion. According to Strada, Gorky's aesthetic strictly opposed subjectivism even in the time of his Capri lectures to workers and it had a tendency to deny a writer's psyche. In this regard it seems to comply with Slavic orthodox tradition, which as we have seen valued collective writing higher than the subjective one. Pedagogical and simultaneously teleological orientation of socialist realism while falling in line with Gorky's view on literature that he has defended since 1909 demonstrates one more trait in common with ancient Russian literature, in which the writer was obliged to «tell the true word» for the sake of «good». In this context Gorky's definition of socialist realism, which «instead of complying with Lenin's ideology was based on «heresy», heavily criticized by Lenin before» [De Michelis 1988: 193], was a reflection of traditional Russian religiousness that Joseph Vissarionovich (Stalin), former trainee priest, understood really well. In these terms Stalin's reasoning for unconditionally accepting Gorky's speech at the Congress, which he has copied from his article denounced by Lenin in 1909, becomes perfectly understandable. «God-building» was a complimentary part to the complex system of formulas of Stalin's political doctrine.

Religious language, cleared of all the references to the transcendent, proved to be very useful for popularizing socialism as it was capable of evoking emotions close to ordinary people's imagination. Stalin understood perfectly that in order to win the masses' goodwill he had to promote simple and relatable ideas that everyone could understand. Therefore the «religious atheism» proposed by the «God-building», which heavily criticized the transcendent and advocated a man's divine attributes, was becoming an instrument of power. According to many scholars, of which I would like to emphasize Vittorio Strada [Strada 1991: 165] and Jean-Pierre Sironneau [Sironneau 1982], the appeal of Marxism is based on the hope for a complete transformation of a person and society in general, and especially on the conviction that salvation is certain to come as a sort of historical necessity. It is due to conclusions like this that Marxism, more than any other ideology, is ready to be transformed into a

secular religion. In the theoretical constructs of Marx and Engels the laws of economics and history substitute God's promise while at the same time completely overcoming transcendence. However, in order to fully understand this phenomenon we must go beyond the scope of Marxism and the borders of Russia, because the idea of a revolution as a revitalizing force is crucial to the 19th century in general. Starting from the French Revolution all of the political movements that planned to overthrow the old establishments followed the dream of a perfect society based on brotherhood and equity.

During the First Soviet Writers' Congress it became obvious that the idea of «God-building», developed in the novel «Confession», was reborn in Gorky's speech, although in a clouded but still recognizable way. The publicist success of the speech led to its incorrect understanding. A resolution was accepted at the final meeting of the Congress, which outlined the following reference points for Soviet writers: «positive heroism in poetry and socialist realism in prose fiction, a fusion of ideological propaganda with Shakespearean picturesque in drama; appreciation of the classics and the literary tradition as a whole; complete freedom of writers» [Poggioli 1937: 19]. In his Congress speech Gorky derives the method of socialist realism from the revolutionary culture as its inevitable conclusion: «The proletarian state must bring up thousands of great «masters of culture», «engineers of souls». It is necessary to do so in order to give back to the whole mass of working people the right to develop their mind, their talents and abilities that they had been robbed of. It is possible to put this intention in practice and it places on us, the writers, the responsibility for our work and our social conduct. Not only it places us in a traditional for realistic literature role of «judges of the world and the people» and «critics of life», but it provides us with a right to participate directly in the construction of a new life, in the process of «changing the world». Possession of this right is what must instil in every writer the sense of importance of his duty and his responsibility for literature as a whole, for all the phenomena that shouldn't be a part of it» [Gorky 1934: 18].

This is only part of Gorky's speech, however. There were a number of moments that could have attracted Stalin's attention. Gorky called himself a «questionable Marxist», in his speech that gave him his desired role of the father of Russian literature, allowed himself several quite significant deviations from the ideological canon of Marxism. For example, he started with the following statement: «The role of different labour processes that transformed a vertical animal into a man and laid the foundations of culture has never been studied as deeply and thoroughly as it truly deserves» [Gorky 1934: 5]. Marx and Engels devoted a lot of attention to analysing the concept of labour, but according to Gorky it seems like they did it with an unacceptable superficiality.

Following that we encounter another statement that criticizes Marx's analysis even more directly [Strada 1980: 174–176]: «We have a reason to hope that when the history of culture is written by Marxists we will see that the role of bourgeoisie in cultural processes is heavily overestimated, especially in the realm of literature and even more so in painting, where the bourgeoisie has always been an employer and, therefore, a lawmaker.

The bourgeoisie doesn't have and has never had an inclination towards artistic creativity... The history of scientific and technical discoveries is rich with cases of bourgeoisie resisting even the development of technical culture [...]» [Gorky 1934: 5].

One can't help but remember what other authors wrote on this topic, for example K. Marx and F. Engels, whose Marxist views probably shouldn't be questioned: «The bourgeoisie has disclosed how it came to pass that the brutal display of vigour in the Middle Ages, which reactionaries so much admire, found its fitting complement in the most slothful indolence. It has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exoduses of nations and crusades» [Marx, Engels 1955: 427]. Gorky needs to discredit the revolutionary potential of the bourgeoisie that the founders of Marxism attempted to highlight at every opportunity because only by doing that one could find the ideological reasoning behind the socialist revolution, which took place in an agricultural country that had not quite overcome feudalism yet; in a country that had to completely reorganize its economical basis under the rule of comrade Stalin. One should remember that it took the English bourgeoisie, as Marx wrote in «The Capital», two centuries to achieve such results. Two centuries were required for the initial capital to form and it was soaked with blood and sweat of mercilessly exploited labourers. It is obvious that even if it were possible to bring about the revolution without the bourgeoisie, it would not be possible to distribute the non-existent wealth to the society. In 1934 the Party led by Stalin attempted to prove that it were possible to accumulate such capital that the English bourgeoisie had hoarded for two centuries in just several years. Of course one could not have done it without blood and sweat again, and that is why Gorky had to insist that the revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie could not have been compared to that of the Bolshevik Party. Marx and Engels wrote: «All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind» [Marx, Engels 1955: 427].

In a time when the leaders of the socialist revolution brought about in a separate country made attempts to close the economic and social gap, which had formed over the course of centuries, when this titanic effort brought to life the long forgotten idea of a socialist homeland, «the sober sense, that same sense that had been made even more poignant and merciless by the spirit of revolutionary Marxism, had to be banished» [Strada 1994: 50] writes V. Strada.

In a time when the price for socialism had to be paid in mandatory collectivization, forced industrialization and coercive camp labour, the suffering man was given a laurel wreath and his suicidal labour was given an ideological basis. «Our working masses still don't quite understand that they only work for themselves, for their own sake. This realization is smouldering everywhere but it hasn't yet burst into a glowing, cheerful fire. However nothing can combust before it reaches a certain temperature and nobody has ever been able to

raise the temperature of labour energy better than the Party founded by the genius of Vladimir Lenin and its current leader. We ought to choose labour as the main character of our books, i. e. a man formed by the labour processes, armed with the power of modern engineering; a man that, in turn, renders labour easier and more productive, elevating it to a form of art. We ought to learn to view labour as creativity» [Gorky 1943: 13]. According to Gorky, if the participants of this process do not fully comprehend its lofty goals, they don't need criticism, especially the Marxist criticism, but rather pathetic, some kind of deifying of man. Gorky returns once again to the religion of man and uses the terminology of Bogdanov (for example the expression «a man formed by the labour processes»).

Obviously Gorky's speech does not end there, we could have highlighted his notes on «leaderism» as a widespread malady of his contemporary era; his criticism of Dostoevsky's followers; his tactful insisting that literary policy cannot limit itself to Russia only but ought to include all the diverse cultural traditions of Soviet nations.

The two months of Congress represent the highest point of Gorky's political biography, at least from the official point of view. From that moment Gorky would become an exemplary proletarian writer and his works, especially his novel «Mother», would be a priori interpreted as connected with social realism. L. A. Spiridonova correctly points out that it would be an obstacle for «seeing Gorky not only as a classic of Soviet literature but as a talented and innovative writer who had a lifelong dream of creating a new method in Russian literature». In reality M. Gorky is an outstandingly complex writer who is very difficult to put any kind of label on. Speaking about him as «the founder of socialist realism» without referencing the evolution of his literary and artistic position would be an unforgivable simplification that can distort the real picture. His long and windy path as a writer unites both the modernism of his early stories, inspired by his contemporary European movements as well as works of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, and the realism of «1922–1924 stories», and a large-scale novel «The Life of Klim Samgin» in which the realism and the psychological reflections mirror the traits of the best European modernist works, and finally his novel «Mother», which L. A. Spiridonova called «the gospel of the new faith» [Spiridonova 2004: 64].

In this novel, as well as in «Confession» that followed it, «Gorky expressed the religious roots of Bolshevism, its «Promethean theomachy» better than anyone else» [Agurskiy 1991: 54–74], however this is not enough to consider him the founder of the socialist realism.

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